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AQUILA.

SOME discoveries of lost works of ancient literature do not want any explanation as to why they are interesting. When Mr. Grenfell and Mr. Hunt came back from Egypt with what seem to be hitherto unknown sayings of Jesus Christ, there is no question as to the interest they excite, whatever may be our opinion about the value of the document. We are all interested at once. But other "finds" are not of this description; and we need to be told not only what they are, but even why they are worth finding; and among these must be counted the fragments of Aquila which have lately come to light at Cambridge. A short estimate of his position in Biblical study may not be out of place now that our knowledge of his work has been so unexpectedly enlarged.

The document I have had the good fortune to discover comes from the "hoard of Hebrew MSS." which Dr. Taylor and Mr. Schechter have brought to this country from the *Geniza* of the Cairo synagogue¹. It consists of palimpsest fragments of vellum, containing in uncials of the fifth or sixth century portions of the Old Testament translated from Hebrew into Greek. Internal evidence makes it quite clear that the translation is that of Aquila, a Jew or proselyte to Judaism who lived about the middle of the second century A.D. The work of Aquila has hitherto been known to us only from the surviving fragments of Origen's *Hexapla*. My readers will remember that Origen, the great Christian scholar and divine, who lived in the first half of the third century A.D., made a sort of critical

¹ See Mr. Schechter's description of these MSS. in the *Times* of Aug. 3, 1897.

edition of the Old Testament, containing in six parallel columns the Hebrew text, a transliteration of the Hebrew into Greek characters, a revised text of the Septuagint version, and the three Jewish Greek versions of Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus. These three versions were made in the second century A.D., and had all been intended to supersede the Septuagint, i. e. the old Greek version of the Old Testament, parts of which date from before 250 B.C. But the *Hexapla* has perished, so that our knowledge of Aquila's version has been confined to scattered notes taken from the *Hexapla* which are found in the margins of some MSS. of the Septuagint, and to stray quotations (also derived from the *Hexapla*) in the works of learned Church fathers like St. Jerome.

But this only describes what the version of Aquila *is*, not why it is interesting. A translation may be interesting in three ways:—

- (1) It may be of high literary value in itself;
- (2) It may help us to understand the meaning of the original;
- (3) It may be neither beautiful nor exact, but yet it may have been translated from a very good copy of the original. In this case it will be useful to us in mending the original text.

Examples of (1) are the "Authorized Version," which is agreed by all to be a noble monument of the English tongue; and from our own times we may take Fitzgerald's translation of Omar Khayyam. Examples of (2) may be found in many translations by modern scholars, such as Monro's *Lucretius*. The great example of (3) is the LXX itself. There are many places in the Old Testament where our Hebrew Bibles have a wrong reading, but the LXX has words implying a different underlying Hebrew which gives a better or more forcible sense.

Now the translation of Aquila has none of these merits. It is written in Greek more uncouth than has ever before issued from the Cambridge University Press; the Hebrew

text from which it was translated is almost identical with that to be found in modern printed Bibles ; while finally, though it is an excessively literal translation, our knowledge of Hebrew is at least as great as Aquila's, so that he does not help us to understand the original any more than we knew already.

Nevertheless, Aquila's translation has still for all who are interested in the study of the Old Testament a real and definite interest. It marks the beginning of modern study of the Hebrew Bible among Western nations—I was almost going to say the beginning of modern criticism. From this point of view its interest is historical. Both in itself and as the representative of a school it was a very important work, and marked an important epoch. There is also the influence which we can now see that it had through the *Hexapla* in modifying the text of the LXX. To restore the original text of the LXX is at present one of the chief tasks of Biblical scholarship, and a main factor in the corruption of the LXX has been the introduction of readings from the translation of Aquila.

Thus we may group our study of Aquila under two heads: (1) his place in the history of Hebrew learning, that is, in the history of the study of the Old Testament; and (2) his influence on the Bible of the Greek-speaking Church. The object of this paper is to indicate the main features of the first of these divisions.

But before going further, let us look at a few examples of Aquila's style. By the discovery of portions of the continuous text of the work we can now gain a fair impression of what it must have been like as a whole. The new MS. confirms what we had known from the surviving fragments of the *Hexapla* as to the pedantic literalness of the translation. The Hebrew ו in all its varied significations is always rendered καί by Aquila, and the Hebrew for "also" (וְ) is rendered καίγε; in this he is only following the LXX. But when וְ (i.e. "and also") occurs in the Hebrew, Aquila thinks it necessary to render it by καὶ καίγε!

Similarly the Hebrew preposition **אִתּ** means "with," and is translated by Aquila *σύν*. But **אִתּ** is also used before the object of the verb when the object is defined, e.g. by the article. Aquila is not content to leave this **אִתּ** untranslated. When possible he renders it by the Greek article, so that *ὁς ἐξήμαρτεν τὸν Ἰσραήλ* stands for *ὁ ἰσραήλ אִתּ*, "who made Israel to sin." But this is not possible where the *Hebrew* article and **אִתּ** occur together. So, because **אִתּ** means "with" elsewhere, he translates this **אִתּ** also by *σύν*. Apparently he meant it to be a sort of adverb, having the force of "therewith" or something of the kind, as it does not govern a case.

The general effect of all this may be seen by a specimen, which I have translated literally into English that one may realize its absurdity.

2 Kings xxiii. 25.

<i>καὶ ὅμοιος αὐτῷ οὐκ ἐγενήθη</i>	And like him did not come
	to pass
<i>εἰς πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ βασιλεὺς</i>	to his face a king
<i>ὃς ἐπέστρεψεν πρὸς ἰηοῦ</i>	who returned unto Jehovah
<i>ἐν πάσῃ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ</i>	in all his heart
<i>καὶ ἐν πάσῃ ψυχῇ αὐτοῦ</i>	and in all his soul
<i>καὶ ἐν πάσῃ σφοδρότητι αὐτοῦ</i>	and in all his muchness
<i>κατὰ πάντα νόμον Μωσῆ,</i>	according to every law of
	Moses,
<i>καὶ μετ' αὐτὸν οὐκ ἀνέστη</i>	and after him arose not
<i>ὅμοιος αὐτῷ.</i>	like him.

Any one who will take the trouble to compare this Greek rendering with the Hebrew and with the ordinary Greek text of the LXX will see that Aquila is exactly following the Hebrew, and that my English rendering of him does not exaggerate the effect his pedantic style must have produced¹.

¹ In the MS. the Tetragrammaton is written in *archaic Hebrew characters*, similar to those on coins and in the Siloam Inscription. The rendering of **יהוה**, here used as a substantive, by *σφοδρότης* is caused by the fact that the common adverb **כִּי** "much" is always rendered by *σφόδρα*.

But details such as these do not reach the heart of the matter. No literary work ever succeeded out of pedantry, and in dealing with Aquila and his absurd peculiarities we must always bear in mind that his work was eminently successful. The public for which it was designed accepted it unchanged. It was the version used by Greek-speaking Jews down to the rise of Islam and the Arab Empire, and detached readings from it were extensively adopted by great Christian scholars. To estimate the reason of its success we must take a rapid glance at the history of Hebrew learning in the centuries immediately preceding and following the rise of Christianity.

It is obvious that Aquila's peculiar methods were never meant to attract men towards the study of the Bible. In this respect he differs altogether from such Graeco-Jewish writers as Josephus and Philo. He does not seek to prove to the Gentile world the excellence of the ancient records of the Jews, or to exhibit the stores of Platonic philosophy that may be extracted from the Mosaic Law. On the contrary, his work was designed for the use of those who already believed the Old Testament to be the very Oracles of God, and who therefore were anxious to learn, down to the minutest particular, what was actually contained therein.

I have suggested that Aquila marks the beginning of modern criticism. That is, perhaps, a paradox; but criticism rests on accurate exegesis, and Aquila certainly marks the beginning of thorough exegesis of the Old Testament. Exegetes and commentators of all ages may be divided into two main classes. The one class tries to find out *what the Bible can teach us*, the other aims at discovering *what the Bible really means*. Of course there are those who combine the two, and indeed both are necessary in their place. Now the Old Testament is a literature of various ages and character. We are all of us more or less interested in the criticism of it and in its bearing on the religious history of mankind and on theological specu-

lation. But it comes before us in the first place as a book written in Hebrew, and we have to begin by construing it ourselves, or at least getting it construed by somebody else. Nowadays we can go to the Revised Version if we are in doubt, or if that be not good enough for us we can read up Gesenius' *Hebrew Dictionary*. But neither of these helps existed in the first centuries of our era. Moreover, we may ask, how do Gesenius or the Revisers know the meaning?

Hebrew is a dead language. For many centuries there has been no community where it has been spoken by the girl to her lover or the child to its parents. The Jews have been accustomed to use Hebrew in prayers, in the school, and as a medium of learned intercourse; but it is as dead as Latin. The Bible, therefore, needs explanation for them as well as for Gentiles. It is not enough for us to take the Jewish exegesis without inquiring upon what foundation that exegesis rests.

Of course Hebrew did not die off all at once. The process began with the Captivity and the condition of the exiles on their return to Jerusalem. They were no longer a nation, but a band of co-religionists surrounded and mingled with Aramaic-speaking peoples. Naturally Aramaic, at that time the *lingua franca* of Western Asia, became more and more their true language in daily life. So much was this the case that the custom sprang up of orally translating the Hebrew Bible verse by verse when it was read out in the synagogues. From this custom arose what are called *Targums*, or Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew Scriptures. The old Targums were popular in their origin; there was no attempt in them at philological accuracy. In their present form at least the Hebrew text as we have it underlies them, but they make no pretence of being accurate translations. They are, in fact, frankly *edifying*; they aim at telling the people what the Bible can be made to mean, according to the then popular Jewish hopes and fears. What offended the popular conceptions of fitness, such as the ascription of anthropomorphic

functions or the giving of semi-mythological names to God, was studiously paraphrased. Prophetic allusions to contemporary events, which depended for their effect on local knowledge or accurate nomenclature, are often turned into vague general statements about the coming Messianic kingdom or the praise of the Law. Meanwhile the Hebrew language was dying, and there was no exact exegetical tradition to take the place of the instinctive process whereby a man arrives at the meaning of a sentence written in his native tongue. It was not a question of isolated difficulties, but of the general understanding of the whole mass of the ancient literature.

The depth of ignorance of Hebrew reached in circles that might have been expected to have retained some considerable knowledge is shown once for all by the ancient Greek version of the Old Testament which we call the Septuagint. As a translation, that venerable monument of Alexandrian scholarship has but few merits. Sometimes it is slavish without being exact, and sometimes it is paraphrastic without being intelligent. "Things originally spoken in Hebrew," complains the grandson of Ben Sira, about 130 B. C., "have not the same force in them when they are translated into another tongue." Especially, we may add, is this the case when they are translated with so little knowledge of Hebrew as are the Prophets in the LXX, or the Book of Job, or in fact any passage which contains linguistic difficulties. Yet the LXX held its ground, and passed for the Divine Word unchallenged. It is equally the Bible of Philo, and of St. Luke, and of St. Clement of Rome.

This, then, was the state of Biblical science about the time of Jesus Christ. In Palestine alone any knowledge of Hebrew survived, and there the bent of theological activity was alien to the exact study of literature. The "tradition of the elders" and the political hopes of a people still nominally free occupied the attention which might otherwise have been given to the utterances of the ancient

prophets and seers. Outside Palestine the Hebrew language was unknown, and the Scriptures were current only in a most inadequate translation.

A crisis was precipitated through the destruction of Jerusalem and the consequent cessation of national life and the Temple worship. All was lost but the Law and the Prophets, and the study of the Bible became the absorbing interest of the patriotic Jew. In proportion as the canonical Scriptures were regarded as wholly and in all their parts the very word of God himself, it became logically obvious that every jot and tittle might be full of fundamental doctrine. The school of Jewish divines which grew up in Galilee after 70 A.D., headed by the famous Rabbi Akiba, was largely occupied in dragging out rules of faith and practice from scraps and phrases of Scripture. If Hebrew was the holy language, verbal similarities of the most trifling kind must have signification, and may be pressed into theological controversy. We may remember St. Paul's disquisition upon "seed" and "seeds" (Gal. iii. 16 foll.). That is merely a specimen of the method, only it was pursued with immense ingenuity and abundant illustration.

All this was the very reverse of rational exegesis, but it had one good side. To practise it a very accurate knowledge of the text of the whole Old Testament was required¹. If each particle was significant, each particle must be known. If words derived from the same root have something common in their interpretation, the science of etymology becomes of practical interest. Thus arose among Semitic-speaking Jews a study of the old Hebrew literature, conducted somewhat on the same principles as our study of Latin and Greek. That is to say, the documents were taken as they stand, and the meanings deduced

¹ The services of the school of Akiba in the final settlement of the *Canon* are generally recognized (see the well-known Mishnaic passage *Jadaim*, iii. 5). The exact agreement of the translation of Aquila with the present Massoretic text is itself a proof of the care this school gave to the *Text*.

by etymological rules and by analogy. It is, after all, the scientific method of working at a dead language, and as such it ultimately bore noble fruit. Side by side with the distorted legal applications, for the extraction of which the method was originally adopted, there grew up among the Jews a grammatical tradition about the Hebrew language, which is to a great extent the basis of what is accepted at the present day by scholars of every type. This tradition was strengthened in the Middle Ages by the fortunate prevalence of Arabic, a Semitic language even more formal in its grammar than Hebrew, and thus admirably adapted as a groundwork for the codification of Hebrew grammar. But the Jewish grammarians of the ninth and succeeding centuries could never have done their work if they had not found ready to their hand a fixed text and a more or less definite grammatical tradition.

The Greek-speaking Jew, however, was at first shut out from the new science. The Septuagint is often not literal or even consistent, but it was alone in the field, and Jews and Christians alike used it in the first century A.D. We learn, however, from Justin Martyr that by the middle of the second century the Jews had begun to complain of the use to which the Christians put certain very doubtful renderings. In any case the LXX was ill-adapted for the exegesis of Akiba's school, and it is not surprising to find that it was one of Akiba's disciples that made the new literal translation of the canonical Scriptures into Greek. Aquila's aim was to make a version so exact that the reader could use it as the Hebrew Bible. Again we must remind ourselves that there was then no Hebrew grammar and no Hebrew dictionary. In fact, Aquila's translation bears the mark of its purpose on every page. If the LXX has all the characteristics of the schoolboy's construe, Aquila in his turn may be described as a colossal crib.

And it was as a crib—a help to translation—that it did

its most useful work. Aquila's version, once it was published in Greek, became accessible to Christians as well as to Jews, and it is to the eternal credit of certain early Christian scholars that they were willing to use this product of Jewish learning for the emendation of the Church's Bible. The two later Jewish or semi-Jewish translations, those of Theodotion and Symmachus, were also laid under contribution, and that of Theodotion especially has more extensively than any of the three been used to supplement and correct the LXX. But neither Theodotion nor Symmachus was adapted as Aquila was adapted to help the Western student in grappling with the difficulties of the Hebrew text. Not that there ever were many European Christians before the sixteenth century of our era who knew even the elements of Hebrew. But Aquila was studied by Origen and by St. Jerome, and they show their appreciation of his work by the use they have made of him.

Origen transcribed Aquila in full next the Hebrew columns of the *Hexapla*, and often employed it in bringing the LXX into accordance with the current Hebrew text. It is this revised text which, roughly speaking, survives to the present day as the Old Testament in Greek. A hundred and fifty years after Origen, St. Jerome was preparing his new translation, which was destined to become the Bible of the Western Church. He also made great use of Aquila, so that many traces of his work survive in the Latin Vulgate. Both Origen and St. Jerome not unnaturally have softened much of Aquila's pedantry, but they profited by the real erudition which underlay it. It is very doubtful whether their labours would have been possible if Aquila had not prepared the way before them.

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